



**SRO**

STATE SCHOOL REFORM/REDESIGN OFFICE  
Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget

# Unreasonable Hardship Determination Report

Muskegon Heights Academy

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February 2017

DRAFT

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## Framework

### **State School Reform/Redesign Office Background and Legal Authority**

The State School Reform/Redesign Office (SRO) was established in 2010 to serve as Michigan's academic accountability office. The mission of the SRO is to turn Michigan's Priority Schools into the highest-performing schools in Michigan. The SRO's vision is to create the necessary conditions for a globally superior public education system. To do this, the SRO uses both incentives for academic success and consequences for chronic failure. The following state and federal statutes establish the SRO and govern the office's action steps:

Michigan's Revised School Code 380.1280c: Section 1280c of the Revised School Code charges the SRO with the responsibility of identifying and supervising the lowest achieving 5% of schools (Priority Schools). Priority Schools submit reform/redesign plans to improve performance, and the SRO is granted authority to implement intervention if academic progress is not made (i.e. CEO operator for multiple schools, State School Reform/Redesign District (SSRRD), etc.). Priority Schools are required to submit monitoring reports to the SRO in a manner and frequency as determined by the SRO. The statute also provides exemptions for districts under emergency management.

Michigan's Executive Order No. 2015-9: Executive Order 2015-9 transferred the SRO from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB). It also transferred all authority, powers, duties, functions, and responsibilities assigned to MDE and the Superintendent of Public Instruction under MCL 380.1280c to the SRO.

Michigan Public Act 192 (i.e. Enrolled House Bill 5384): The law divides the Detroit Public School District (DPS) into two separate districts and requires the SRO to mandate school closures via specified stipulations.

Under these statutes, the State School Reform/Redesign Office must make notifications and issue orders to Public School Academy Authorizers and/or Traditional Public School Superintendents/Board Presidents establishing different levels of accountability based on the performance of the schools they operate/authorize.

### **Purpose**

On January 20, 2017, the SRO published the order subjecting [School] to a Next Level of Accountability pending an Unreasonable Hardship Determination as required under subsection 391(3), MCL 380.391(3). The purpose of this report is to:

- Outline the Unreasonable Hardship Review Process
- Detail the findings of the Unreasonable Hardship Review
- Publish the final Unreasonable Hardship Determination for **Muskegon Heights Academy**, and
- Detail next steps that the SRO recommends in light of the final Unreasonable Hardship Determination.



## Unreasonable Hardship Review Process

In accordance with MCL 380.391(3), the SRO must complete an analysis of whether closure of **Muskegon Heights Academy** will result in unreasonable hardship to pupils attending **Muskegon Heights Academy**. The SRO will consider other public school options available to students in the grade levels offered and geographic area served by the public school identified for closure to determine if closing the identified school(s) would result in an unreasonable hardship for the impacted students. The SRO is committed to ensuring that the closure of a failing school does not necessitate the enrollment of a displaced student in another failing school. The SRO's Unreasonable Hardship Review will consist of three parts:

1. **Part 1:** A comprehensive review of all available data related to the past and current performance of the identified school(s)
2. **Part 2:** An academic and an operational on-site review
3. **Part 3:** A detailed examination of other public school options available to students in the grade levels offered and geographic area served by the public school identified for closure.

A set of research-based Turnaround Practices served as the framework for the SRO's Unreasonable Hardship Review. The Turnaround Practices<sup>1</sup> are based on both academic and practice-based research on the common characteristics of successful turnaround schools and are organized into five different domains:

- **Domain 1:** Leadership, Shares Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration
- **Domain 2:** Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction
- **Domain 3:** Providing Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students
- **Domain 4:** School Climate and Culture
- **Domain 5:** District System: Districts develop systems to support, monitor, and sustain turnaround efforts

By structuring the SRO's Unreasonable Hardship Review around these domains the SRO is acknowledging that in determining unreasonable hardship one must not only examine historic performance but must also work intimately with local community members and educators to determine if the academic and operational realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround.

All of the information produced and insights gained from the Unreasonable Hardship Review Process have informed the SRO's Final Unreasonable Hardship Determination, which consists of a series of 3 Key Questions:

- **Question 1:** Are the academic and operational realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround?
- **Question 2:** Are there are sufficient other public school options reasonably available to these pupils?
- **Question 3:** Would the proposed NLA action result in an unreasonable hardship to the displaced pupils?

<sup>1</sup> See Edmonds, 1979; Bryk et al., 2010; Marzano, 2003; Newmann et al., 2001; Lane et al., 2014)

## Unreasonable Hardship Review Part 1: Data Review

In an effort to inform the Unreasonable Hardship Determination, the SRO requested a comprehensive set of both academic, cultural, and operational data from **Muskegon Heights Academy**. The data provided can be viewed in Appendix A. In reviewing this data as well as previously state-reported academic data, the SRO has identified the following Key Takeaways related to the past, and current realities of **Muskegon Heights Academy**.

### Data Review Key Takeaways

- **Academic (Domains 2 and 3)**
  - Proficiency
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of proficiency demonstrated for all students in Mathematics increased from [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of students with disabilities that demonstrated proficiency in Mathematics was [REDACTED] for both years
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of proficiency demonstrated for all students in Reading/ELA dropped from 5.41% to [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of students with disabilities that demonstrated proficiency in Reading/ELA increased from [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of proficiency demonstrated for all students in Science was [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of students with disabilities that demonstrated proficiency in Science was [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of proficiency demonstrated for all students in Social Studies grew from [REDACTED]
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percent of students with disabilities that demonstrated proficiency in Social Studies was [REDACTED]
  - Student Instructional Support Systems (Interventions)
    - The school provided content area coaches in all core areas from local universities and related partnerships including their ISD.
    - High School students are using Khan Academy and Edify four days a week for thirty minutes per day to help with SAT, PSAT, and M-Step test preparation. They use "Ten Effective Research Based Instructional Strategies" by Robert J. Marzano. Students enrolled in this class attend five days a week for one hour. Seventh and Eighth grade teachers coordinate and facilitate an intervention entitled "Flashback Friday".
    - The school employs schoolwide PBIS (SWPBIS), MiBLSi and other socio-emotional support systems to assist students in emotional development.
  - Curriculum
    - ELA: MAISA Units of Study, research based best instructional practices, and SRO Essential Standards are the foundations of the ELA curriculum that is being utilized for the 16-17 school year. The MAISA Units provide best instructional practices that lend themselves to differentiation of instruction for students.
    - Math: EngageNY/Eureka, research based best instructional practices, and SRO Essential Standards are the foundations of the mathematics curriculum that is being utilized for the 16-17 school year. The EngageNY/Eureka program is being utilized k-12 to assure multi-faceted alignment, including: Common Core State Standards, cross-grade level, and the new college- and career-ready standards.



- Science: We are using SRO Essential Standards and Next Generation Science standards that provide the inquiry based approach to learning by design.
  - Social Studies: Social studies teachers are using Document Based Questioning in order to write essays based on research, SRO Essential Standards, and the MC3 Social Studies (now known as Social Studies MAISA units) curriculum in Curriculum Crafter.
- **Climate and Culture** (Domains 3 and 4)
  - Enrollment
    - Between 2014 and 2016, enrollment grew from 260 to 315 (55 student difference)
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the number of economically disadvantaged students decreased from 215 to 253 (38 student difference).
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percentage of economically disadvantaged students decreased from 82.7% to 80.3%.
    - African Americans consistently make up 93% or more of the student population.
    - Between 2014 and 2016 enrollment grew in grades 7,8, and 10, with the greatest growth being from 0 students in 2014 to 45 students in 2016 (in both grades 7 and 8)
    - The greatest decline in student enrollment occurs in grade 12 from 63 to 38 students.
  - Attendance
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the attendance rate has grown from 79.2% to 99.0%.
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the percentage of chronically absent students has dramatically decreased from 56.3% (153 students) to 6.7% (22 students).
- **Professional** (Domains 1 and 5)
  - Teacher Evaluation
    - Between 2014 and 2016 the number of teachers decreased by six from 22 to 14.
    - The number of teachers rated as highly effective was 0 in 2014 and 0 in 2016.
    - The number of teachers rated as effective decreased from 20 (90.9%) to 12 (85.7%) in 2016.
    - There were 2 teachers rated as marginally effective or ineffective in 2016.
    - In 2016, 2 (14.3%) teachers were rated as marginally effective.
    - In 2016, 0 (0%) teachers were rated as ineffective.

## Unreasonable Hardship Review Part 2a: Academic On-Site Review

On February 13, 2017, two representatives of the SRO conducted the Academic On-Site Review for **Muskegon Heights Academy**. The purpose of this visit was to gain current and school-specific information related to the current academic realities of **Muskegon Heights Academy** from its building leaders, teachers, parents and community members. The Academic On-Site Review was structured as follows:

- Interviews with Building Leadership
- Building Walk-Through with Classroom Observations
- Teacher Leader Focus Group
- Student Focus Group
- Parent/Community Focus Group

In a letter sent on January 23, 2017, the SRO requested that **Muskegon Heights Academy** nominate both teacher leaders as well as parents and community members to participate in the Academic On-Site Review. The nominated individuals as well as the focus group participants are included in Appendix B.

The review was structured around the research-based Turnaround Practices & questions that served to frame both the interviews as well as the focus group discussions. Responses from conversations were analyzed & evaluated for alignment with key indicators of best practices for high-gain, rapid turnaround schools. The following pages provide the results from the site visit. Rubric ratings (see below) and corresponding evidence (in bulleted form) is provided for each Turnaround Practice component.

### Rubric Descriptors

<u>Strong alignment with best practice</u>	<u>Moderate alignment with best practice</u>	<u>Low alignment with best practice</u>
All indicators are evident and there is strong evidence that key structures and practices are being used effectively to improve instruction.	Some of the indicators are evident and there is some evidence that key structures and practices are being used effectively to improve instruction.	A few or none of the indicators are evident and/or there is little to no evidence that key structures and practices are being used effectively.

A key purpose of the site visit is to assess each school's capacity to engage in accelerated turnaround and to inform decisions regarding unreasonable hardship. As such, site reviewers and the SRO are focused on the following overarching questions.

<b>Domain 1: Leadership, Shares Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the school have a collaborative environment (e.g., sufficient teaming structures and ways of working together) that can lead to accelerated instructional improvement?</li><li>• Does the school leadership have systems in place to monitor and support the implementation of improvement strategies, including the use of frequent classroom observations?</li></ul>	<b>Domain 2: Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the school utilize a common core curriculum that is instructionally coherent and that displays a strong understanding of high quality instruction, among teachers and as supported and observed by administrators?</li><li>• Does school leadership have a system in place to identify teachers that may need additional support, and specific strategies for providing such support?</li></ul>
<b>Domain 3: Providing Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the school have and actively utilize a system of assessments and interventions capable of providing student-specific supports and subsequent monitoring of the effectiveness of interventions?</li></ul>	<b>Domain 4: School Climate and Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the school provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial and professional culture among adults?</li></ul>



## Determining Capacity for Successful Turnaround

**Key Question 1:** What are the core issues and challenges that have kept students at your school from achieving? How are you addressing these issues and challenges?

**Key Question 2:** What are the key practices and strategies that distinguish your school, and will allow your school to improve, leading to increased student achievement in the near future?

	Alignment with Best Practice
<b>Adaptive Instructional Improvement</b> All stakeholders espouse an “improvement mindset” reflected in the school’s continuous review and assessment of improvement practices and strategies used within the school. Key Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school stops or modifies strategies that are not working and expands those that are working.</li> </ul>	
<b>Respectful and Trusting Learning Environment</b> All stakeholders (students, teachers, community members, etc.) have high expectations for students and value working with and learning from each other. Key Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and students state that they believe that all of the students in the school will succeed (e.g., will do well in classes, graduate, attend and graduate college).</li> <li>Teachers and administrators work together in formal and informal teams on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	
<b>Instructional Rigor</b> Instruction and instructional practices are engaging, differentiated, and sufficiently challenging for all students. Key Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers provide all students with lessons and instruction directly aligned with common core standards and aligned instructional practices.</li> <li>Written lessons and taught instruction includes stated and written learning objectives, multiple instructional strategies, and challenging (e.g., higher order) tasks, problems, and questioning strategies.</li> </ul>	
<b>Targeted Interventions</b> The school expertly uses specific instructional strategies/interventions executed with a high degree of instructional expertise. Key Indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student work is consistently improving.</li> <li>Instructional strategies and interventions are implemented with fidelity.</li> </ul>	

- Building leadership appears highly engaged in many programs and projects that support student and teacher engagement.
- According to the staff, there are many challenges students face and the turnaround process is slow.
- Leaders have full autonomy in staffing. They are also fully staffed at this time.



### Turnaround Strategy Domain 1: Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration

The school has established a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration.

**Key Question:** How, and to what extent, do you (and your leadership team) cultivate shared ownership, responsibility, and professional collaboration in the school?

Turnaround Strategy Components	Alignment with Best Practice
<b>Teaming, Shared Leadership and Responsibility, and Collaboration</b> Distributed leadership structures and practices are apparent throughout the school building in the form of an active and well-represented Leadership Team and grade-level and vertical teams.  Key indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school leadership team meets regularly and includes representation from all grades and student needs.</li><li>• Grade-level and vertical teams meet regularly.</li><li>• Teams exhibit a strong commitment to high expectations for all students and a willingness to work together to improve instruction.</li></ul>	
<b>Using Teams, Shared Leadership, and a Collaborative and Trusting Environment to Accelerate Improvement</b> Administrators and teachers (through teacher teams or involvement in the leadership team) are monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of key improvement strategies, use of resources, classroom instructional practices, and non-academic supports on student achievement.  Key indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Adaptation:</b> Leadership has the demonstrated ability to adapt, innovate and do whatever it takes to improve student achievement.</li><li>• <b>Instructional Observation:</b> Instruction is formally and informally observed and meaningful feedback is provided. Teachers, as well as students, are held to high expectations.</li></ul>	

- The leadership team reported that low student proficiency could be attributed to curriculum changes. They also attributed this to teacher turnover and lower and/or inconsistent teacher expectations.
- The leadership team reported that they are growing capacity in both their leaders and in teachers through a support certificate and collegiate education program. This is bringing more consistency in teacher longevity and in turn student growth, although marked improvements in state standardized test performance have yet to be seen.
- School leadership added a teaching cycle as a measure of teacher performance. They have also added many pre-and post-tests for students to measure growth during the school year.
- The leadership team reported that it shares responsibilities through weekly leadership team meetings to discuss student interventions, teacher progress, and curricular cohesiveness outside of the school (i.e. in previous elementary grades).

- The leadership team reported that it discusses rigor and relevance as it related to teacher's lessons and makes recommendations or interventions as needed.
- The leadership team reported that it is working in music instruction to maintain music opportunities throughout the K-12 years, but the emphasis with this and other non-core programs should be to continually nurture and increase student reading and math abilities.
- The leadership team reported that they have autonomy to make decisions that involve staff and curriculum. The leadership continually guides staff to implement and integrate their curriculum and help low level learners to make up gaps in learning.
- The leadership team reported that their core values in creating robust, sustainable schoolwide changes are (1) having a strong curriculum that raises SAT scores, which can include afterschool and weekend tutorials, and (2) change the culture and climate in the building, which can either be in changing adult attitudes or children's attitudes, and (3) that teachers use data to inform instruction.
- The leadership team reported that it aims to support changes such as a deeper PBIS system with research. It is aiming to use all available resources (funding and human capital) to bring positive change in achievement.
- The leadership team reported that it maintains effective connections with MDE, MDE's strategic initiatives for schools, PSA supports, MIExcel, and other outside stakeholders like their ISD to bring about effective change.



## Turnaround Strategy Domain 2: *Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction*

The school uses an aligned system of common core curricula, assessments, and common instructional practices across the school and content areas, and employs intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction.

**Key Question:** What are the strategies and practices that you and your colleagues use to improve instruction? Specifically, how do you work to improve teachers' instruction?

Turnaround Strategy Components	Alignment with Best Practice
<p><b>Common core curriculum and aligned and rigorous instructional practices.</b>  Administrators and teachers develop and use vertically and horizontally aligned curricula and instructional strategies that includes common units, lessons, assessments, and instructional strategies and language within and across grades and content areas.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers' unit and lesson plans are similarly structured, incorporating best practices, directly linking lesson content with the grade-level standards and standards taught in prior and subsequent grades.</li> <li>A common set of instructional strategies, academic language, and other learning tools are evident in lessons and in practice, to enable students to access content.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Defined expectations for high quality instructional practices</b>  The school has a clear instructional focus and shared expectations for instructional best practices that address students' instructional needs.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaders and teachers understand the instructional focus and how the instructional focus informs (or is evident in) classroom practice.</li> <li>Teachers have received training and professional development on the instruction focus and related instructional strategies.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Teacher support and feedback to improve instruction</b>  Teachers are actively supported to develop high quality lessons, deliver high quality lessons and instruction and to become experts in using and refining effective instructional strategies.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principal (or administrators or coaches) spend significant time in classrooms, observing teachers' instruction and providing teachers with constructive and useful feedback on instructional practices.</li> <li>Teachers (and teacher team) use a variety of standards-based assessments to assess the effectiveness of instructional strategies and modify instruction accordingly.</li> </ul>	

- Classroom observations did not reveal rigorous, systematic instruction to reach multi-year gains. Teachers did not reach standards or were seen making mistakes in content area. Student engagement and affirmation process were inconsistently observed.



- The teacher focus group reported that they've been challenged by the multiple changes in curriculum made by building and district leadership. In response, they have built "Flashback Fridays" as a practice to identify what students learn and don't learn each week.
- The teacher focus group reported that absenteeism is a giant issue with students this year and if it is happening at this school, it is also contributing to problems at other grade levels even outside the school.
- The teacher focus group reported that out-of-school issues like the lack of safety at times, lack of family employment, and substance abuse create a situation of lack of support before kids arrive at school. This affects the classroom by requiring added teaching time to overcome trauma responses (i.e. lack of day-to-day memory recall).
- The teacher focus group reported that the building symbolizes a safe community haven from some of the traumas that students face outside of school. The building is the quintessential "safe space" for the students from what is outside the school.
- The teacher focus group reported that mindset of students, especially those who are absent for long periods, is a challenge. Many students do not see value in the academics. Students want to see instant changes in their grades. The development of relationships with students is what teachers use to overcome these needs and assist students as much as they can.
- The teacher focus group reported that student use of language is not aligned with tested use of language and the teachers are challenged by this skill level difference.
- The teacher focus group reported that culturally-responsive teaching practices were taught to teachers over the last year and teachers implement this through student-teacher conversations.
- The teacher focus group reported that having a staff partner is helpful (i.e. a mentor or mentee teacher). These relationships make for strong teacher teams and ability to quickly share student concerns, teaching techniques, or other instrumental feedback.
- The teacher focus group reported that changes in leadership have resulted in making consistent aims to keep kids in school rather than apply punishments outside of school.
- The teacher focus group reported that scaffolding was repeatedly helpful in teaching students new skills. This takes consistency in staff, curriculum, leadership, and the implementation of PBIS.

### Turnaround Strategy Domain 3: *Providing Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students*

The school is able to provide student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs

**Key Question:** How, and to what extent, does your school provide student-specific supports and interventions to students?

Turnaround Strategy Components	Alignment with Best Practice
<p><b>Tiered and Targeted Interventions for Students and Monitoring for Effectiveness</b></p> <p>The school has a system (structures, practices, resources) for providing targeted instructional interventions and supports to all students which also includes close monitoring of the impact of tiered interventions on students' progress.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are provided with targeted, student-specific instruction and interventions in direct response to their academic areas of need, rather than placing entire groups of students in intervention groups.</li> <li>The impact of classroom-based and tiered interventions is frequently monitored (e.g., regularly, in 2, 4, or 6 week intervals and often by grade-level teams or by school support teams) and then refined in direct response to students' needs.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Data Use and Data Informed Targeting of Interventions</b></p> <p>Administrators and teachers use a variety of ongoing assessments (formative, benchmark, and summative) to frequently and continually assess instructional effectiveness and to identify students' individual academic needs.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A variety of valid and reliable assessments (standards-based and performance assessments) are used consistently, within and across grades and content area.</li> <li>Administrators and teachers are using assessment to identify the specific students needing additional support and the targeted areas of need for each specific student.</li> </ul>	

- The student focus group reported that teachers play many roles in student's lives. It is important for teachers to get to know their students and to try to understand what is happening at their homes; in this way, they can be mentors, coaches, leaders, and counselors.
- The student focus group reported that teachers create a family-feeling and make every day like a family reunion. This allows for suitable confidentiality and students being able to share big concerns and still focus on their academic needs.
- The student focus group reported that the school supports students in international trips like to Japan or Uganda.
- The student focus group reported that online curriculum from one of the three curriculum shifts was very difficult for students to understand.



#### Turnaround Strategy Domain 4: School Climate and Culture

The school has established a climate and culture that provides a safe, orderly and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the school's focus on increasing student achievement.

**Key Question:** How does your school attend to students' social-emotional health and establish a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students?

Turnaround Strategy Components	Alignment with Best Practice
<p><b>Safety and secure learning environment.</b> The school has established and provides a safe and secure learning environment for students, staff and community members.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student to student interaction and teacher to student interactions are respectful and considerate, as observed during the visit.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Shared Behavioral Expectations that support student learning</b> Administrators and teachers have and use a clearly established set of behavioral expectations and practices that supports students' learning.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations of student behavior are written and clearly shared and understood throughout the school building.</li><li>• Behavioral expectations are reinforced through consistently applied rewards and consequences (consistent among and across teachers and grades).</li></ul>	
<p><b>Targeted and effective social-emotional supports</b> The school has identified, established, and proactively provides effective social-emotional resources and supports for students in need of such supports and assistance.</p> <p>Key indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school has identified a wide array of effective social-emotional responses and supports for students in need of such assistance and support.</li><li>• Students that may need or benefit from social-emotional supports are identified and receive targeted social-emotional support.</li><li>• Data on the effectiveness of social-emotional supports is collected and monitored.</li></ul>	

- The community focus group reported that multiple changes in curriculum (3 times in 4 years) and leadership have been detrimental to students and affected the overall climate leading to a high teacher turnover rate, up to 40% in previous years. That trend is finally starting to taper off.
- The community focus group reported that community climate and shootings/other problems also contribute to instability in students in school and give added learning challenges for teachers to support.



- The community focus group reported that an ongoing threat of closure causes the top students to leave the school. Also, when they get to other schools, they are labeled by other students as being from this community.
- The community focus group reported that the city is working to fix systemic issues and expects the school to do the same (work systemically). City is making a comeback and working hard to remove blighted properties to help property values near the school and in surrounding areas not to go down.
- The community focus group reported that if the school closes, the taxpayers will still be paying the bonds on this building.
- The community focus group reported that the community has a vision for growth that it is trying to infuse in the school. They asked for an opportunity to devise and show more ways to reach the children of this school.
- The parent focus group reported this school has many programs that benefits students as a “safe haven” after school hours.
- The community focus group reported that previous school type changes led to a large dropout rate, and people are fearful that a state-imposed action can lead to more dropouts.

### Turnaround Strategy Domain 5: District System to Support Accelerated Improvement and Turnaround

The district has developed systems for identifying schools that are not performing well, and strategies for monitoring and supporting school leadership and teachers.

Examples of district systems:

- Strategic placement and assignment of principals and teachers in high need schools, including the use of incentives to get the right leaders and teachers in high need schools.
- Provision of additional staffing and resource autonomy to leaders in high need schools
- Provision of additional supports (e.g., coaching supports, instructional resources) to high need schools.

#### Key Questions:

- How does the district monitor and/or support you in your efforts to improve instruction and raise student achievement?
- To what extent has the district provided you with additional autonomy to make changes to staff (e.g., to hire new teachers and/or quickly remove teachers not supportive of your work), to the school's schedule, and in your use of resources? How much autonomy do you have?

	Alignment with Best Practice
<b>District Capacity - Core Functions</b> The District has established and/or provides schools with base supports necessary for effective teaching and learning (Core curriculum and professional development, assessments, data systems, instructional materials, human capital).	
<b>District capacity - Monitor and support</b> The district has established and communicated a district-wide improvement strategy, including a vision and specific goals for improvement. The improvement strategy includes specific strategies for monitoring and supporting schools (leaders, teachers, and students).	
<b>District Capacity – Conditions and Autonomy</b> The district provides schools with sufficient autonomy and authority to implement turnaround actions, while holding schools accountable for results.	

- The district leadership as a PSA reflected the nature of continually growing through changes in staff and curriculum over recent years.
- There was a large connection of community stakeholders including the area's mayor, a state representative, and multiple other influential parents/community members.
- It was clearly visible that the district supports the school in providing a safe environment for students in view of regional challenges that are outside the school.

## **Unreasonable Hardship Review Part 2b: Operational On-Site Review (Facility Conditions Index)**

The SRO partnered with DTMB's Facilities & Business Services Administration Office (SFA) to determine a facility conditions index (FCI) for **Muskegon Heights Academy**. The FCI measures maintenance and repair costs against current replacement cost of the building. The lower the number, the less cost effective it is for the district to keep the building open.

All inspections were designed to be non-intrusive and the results were based on observations and assumptions given the factual knowledge provided.

**FCI SCORE: 68.4**

A copy of DTMB's FCI report is attached to this report as Appendix B.

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### Unreasonable Hardship Review Part 3: Access and Availability

Whether statutorily required under MCL 380.391(3), MCL 380.507(6), MCL 380.528(6), or MCL 380.561(6), or optionally adopted under MCL 380.1280c, the SRO is committed to completing an analysis of whether the proposed closure will result in unreasonable hardship to pupils attending **Muskegon Heights Academy**. The SRO will consider other public school options available to students in the grade levels offered and geographic area served by **Muskegon Heights Academy** to determine if the closure would result in an unreasonable hardship for the impacted students. The SRO is committed to ensuring that any closure does not necessitate the enrollment of a displaced student in another failing school. When evaluating the sufficiency of other public school options for affected pupils and unreasonable hardship, the SRO evaluates a variety of factors that can generally be organized into three different categories. These categories include, but are not limited to:

- **Geography:** Are there schools within a reasonable number of miles from the school identified that serve the same grade levels as the identified school?
- **Performance:** Are there schools that were identified during the geographic evaluation that also have an acceptable Top-to-Bottom ranking?
- **Access:** Do the students that would be displaced by the NLA Action have reasonable access to the schools identified during both the geographic and performance evaluations?

The results of the SRO's analysis are included in the below table. The number of schools that meet the parameters defined in the left most two columns is included in column #3 and the estimated capacity of the qualifying schools is included in column #4. The right-most two columns define the # of qualifying schools that would not require students to utilize the schools-of-choice legislation (MCL 388.1705/MCL 388.1705c) to gain access and the estimated capacity of those qualifying schools that would not require utilization of the schools-of-choice legislation.

Distance Parameter (Maximum in miles)	TTB Ranking Parameter (Minimum)	# of Qualifying School-of-Choice Schools	Estimated Capacity of Qualifying School-of-Choice Schools	# of Qualifying Local Access Schools	Estimated Capacity of Qualifying Local Access Schools	Total # of Qualifying Schools that Displaced Students Could Access	Total Estimated Capacity of Qualifying Schools that Displaced Students Could Access
5	25	0	0	1	7	1	7
10	25	2	4	3	72	5	76
15	25	8	8	3	72	11	80
20	25	9	22	3	72	12	94
25	25	13	66	3	72	16	138
30	25	30	181	6	126	36	307

#### Unreasonable Hardship Data Key Takeaways

- There are no accessible schools of choice that is qualifying and that are located nearby, within 5 miles. Thus, no students could be accommodated.
- There is only 1 accessible local access school within a 5-mile radius and 3 within a 10 mile radius. They could accommodate a total of 72 students.
- The total number of schools within a 10 mile radius that are accessible is 5 schools, and could accommodate up to 76 students.

#### Unreasonable Hardship Review Part 4: Final Determination

The SRO's Final Unreasonable Hardship Determination is based on a comprehensive review of all available data, the results from both operational and academic on-site review visits and an examination the other public school options that are available to the students that would be impacted by the closure of **Muskegon Heights Academy**. All of the information produced and insights gained from the Unreasonable Hardship Review Process that have been detailed in this report, were considered when answering the three key questions that comprise the SRO's Final Unreasonable Hardship Determination.

**Question 1:** Are the academic and operational and academic realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround?

	The academic and operational realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround.
	The academic but not the operational realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround
	The operational but not the academic realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround
	Neither the academic nor the operational realities of the identified school reflective of a school poised for rapid turnaround

**Question 2:** Are there are sufficient other public school options reasonably available to these pupils?

	There are sufficient other public school options reasonably available to these pupils?
	There are insufficient other public school options reasonably available to these pupils?

**Question 3:** Would the proposed NLA action result in an unreasonable hardship to the displaced pupils?

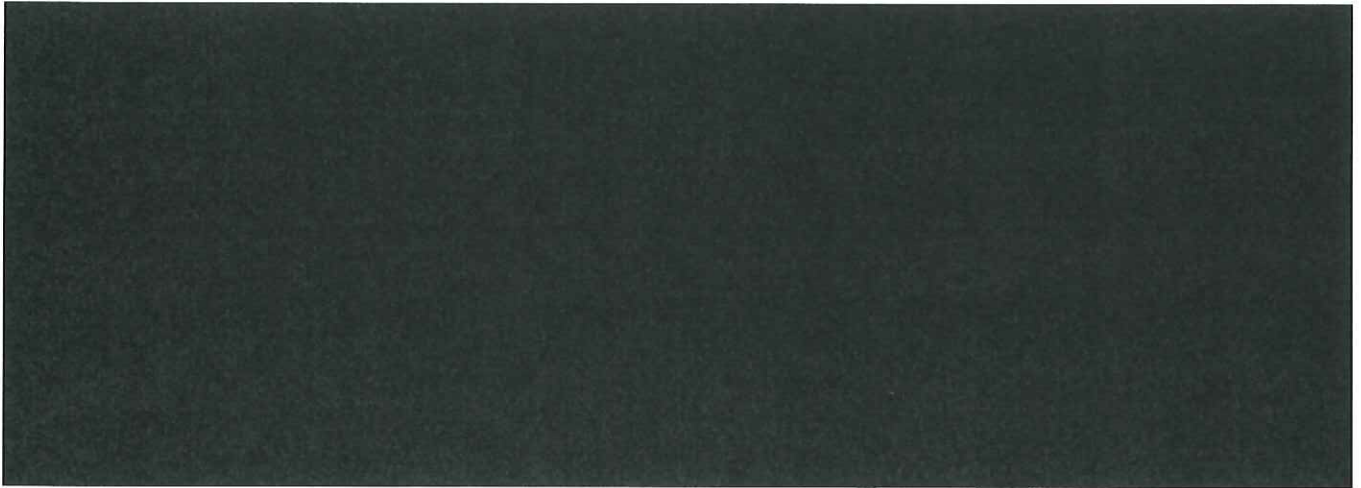
	The proposed NLA action would not result in an unreasonable hardship to the displaced pupils
	The proposed NLA action would result in an unreasonable hardship to the displaced pupils

**Determination:**



**Next Steps:**





DRAFT

## **APPENDIX A: SRO Unreasonable Hardship Data Request Packet**

The SRO is committed to ensuring that the Unreasonable Hardship Determination required under MCL 380.391(3), MCL 380.507(6), MCL 380.528(6), MCL 380.561(6), or optionally adopted under MCL 380.1280c is as informed as possible. Therefore, the SRO is requested that the following information be provided in an editable format (e.g., .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, etc.) by Tuesday, February 1, 2017. Where possible, the information provided will be verified against previously reported and publically available data.

### **Data review components:**

- Academic
- Climate and Culture
- Professional
- Operational

## Academic Data

### Top-to-Bottom Rankings by Year

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
6	3	0	4	0

### Student Proficiency – Mathematics

Student Group	% Proficient or Above 2013-2014	% Proficient or Above 2014-2015	% Proficient or Above 2015-2016
All Students			
Native American			
Asian			
African-American			
Hispanic			
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander			
White			
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic			
Economically Disadvantaged			
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)			
English Language Learners			

### Student Proficiency – Reading/ELA

Student Group	% Proficient or Above 2013-2014	% Proficient or Above 2014-2015	% Proficient or Above 2015-2016
All Students	5.41	5.59	
Native American			
Asian			
African-American	5.56	5.76	
Hispanic			
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander			
White			
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic			
Economically Disadvantaged			
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)		12.5	
English Language Learners			



**Student Proficiency – Science**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2013-2014</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2014-2015</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2015-2016</b>
All Students			
Native American			
Asian			
African-American			
Hispanic			
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander			
White			
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic			
Economically Disadvantaged			
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)			
English Language Learners			

**Student Proficiency – Social Studies**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2013-2014</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2014-2015</b>	<b>% Proficient or Above 2015-2016</b>
All Students			
Native American			
Asian			
African-American			
Hispanic			
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander			
White			
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic			
Economically Disadvantaged			
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)			
English Language Learners			

**4-Year Graduation Rates (if Applicable)**

<b>Student Group</b>	<b># In Cohort 2013-2014</b>	<b>% Graduated 2013-2014</b>	<b># In Cohort 2014-2015</b>	<b>% Graduated 2014-2015</b>
All Students	67	58.2%	52	69.2%
Male	44	52.3%	22	63.6%
Female	23	69.6%	30	73.3%
Native American				
Asian				
African-American	66	57.6%	51	68.6%
Hispanic				
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander				
White				
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic				
Economically Disadvantaged	51	56.9%	46	69.6%
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)	22	36.4%	15	46.7%
English Language Learners				

## Climate and Culture Data

### Enrollment by Subgroup<sup>2</sup>

Race	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	260	386	315
Male	145	201	171
Female	115	185	144
Native American			
Asian			
African-American	251	370	295
Hispanic			
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander			
White			
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic			
Economically Disadvantaged	215	324	253
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)	75	78	64
English Language Learners			

### Enrollment by Grade

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2013-2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	79	63	55	63	260
2014-2015	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	77	79	73	45	54	386
2015-2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	45	66	73	48	38	315

### Special Population Percentages

	2013-2014 (%)	2014-2015 (%)	2015-2016 (%)
English Language Learner			
Students with Disabilities (IEP & 504)	28.8%	20.2%	20.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	82.7%	83.9%	80.3%

### Attendance

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Attendance Rate (%)	79.2%	77.7%	99.0%
Percent Chronically Absent	56.3%	81.4%	6.7%
Chronically Absent Student Count	153	329	22

<sup>2</sup> Enrollment by student(s) does not necessarily indicate that the student(s) will take state assessments.



## Professional Data

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### Teacher Evaluations

	# of Teachers 2013-2014	% of Teachers 2013-2014	# of Teachers 2014-2015	% of Teachers 2014-2015	# of Teachers 2015-2016	% of Teachers 2015-2016
Highly Effective	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Effective	20	90.9%	15	83.3%	12	85.7%
Marginally Effective	1	4.6%	2	11.1%	2	14.3%
Ineffective	1	4.6%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%

Total Teachers	22
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18
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14
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